

UNDER A DARKENING SKY

this matter to live like other creatures, if it is His will, for it is mine. I pray you to pray that supreme eternal Truth that, if it is more for His honour and the salvation of my soul, He may give me grace and enable me to take food, if it pleases Him. And I am certain that the goodness of God will not despise your prayers. I beseech you to write to me what remedy you see for it, and, if only it be to the honour of God, I will gladly adopt it. And I beseech you, too, not to be hasty in judging, unless you are quite sure that you see things as they are in God's sight."¹

The desire that Catherine had expressed in this letter, that she might "be fastened and nailed to the tree of the most holy Cross of Christ crucified with Him, through love and with deep humility," was now to be mystically fulfilled. The church of Santa Cristina stands on the Lung' Arno, not far from the little Gothic gem of Santa Maria deUa Spina, which she, who had chosen a crown of thorns for a crown of pearls, must have seen in all its fresh beauty. Although Santa Cristina in its present form is in the main a building of the nineteenth century, prosaic alike in its surroundings and its interior, there stands still, by the first altar to the right of the entrance, a fragment of one of the pillars of the older church, with the inscription : *Signavit Dominus servant suam Catharinam hie signis redemptions nostrae*: "Here the Lord signed His servant Catherine with the signs of our redemption." For here, on the fourth Sunday of Lent, 1375, the Sunday known as *Laetare Sunday* from the text of Isaiah sung as Introit ("Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her"), while rapt in ecstasy after Communion, Catherine of Siena in a measure received the same

¹ Letter 92 (305), which is one of those included in the Harleian MS. Cf. *Contestatto Fr. Bartholomaei*, *he. cit.*, coll. 1354, 1355 (f. 42 *n t^{ie} Sienese MS.). The poem, or *lauda*, previously quoted, which has hitherto curiously escaped the notice of all the biographers of St. Catherine, leaves no doubt as to the identity of the person who wrote to her. For the life of El Bianco at Citta di Castello, see the *Vita d'alcuni servi di Giesh Crifto* appended to Belcari's *Vita del B. Giovanni Cokmbini*.